

FLATHEAD COUNTY TRANSPORTATION PLAN PHASE II

STUDY AREA BOUNDARY TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM

Prepared for:

Flathead County Planning and Zoning Office
Kalispell, Montana

Prepared by:

Robert Peccia & Associates
Helena, Montana

February 20, 2008



Socioeconomic Analysis and Growth Projections

Introduction

The method and process developed to predict growth in Flathead County over the next twenty years is described in this chapter of the Transportation Plan. Using population, employment and other socio-economic trends as aids, the future transportation requirements of Flathead County was defined. A model of the transportation system of the Flathead County study area was built, and the additions and changes to the system that are projected to occur over the next twenty years were entered into the model to forecast the future transportation conditions. From this, various scenarios were developed to test a range of transportation improvements to establish their affects on the transportation system.

Socioeconomic Analysis

Motor vehicle travel growth is directly correlated with population and economic growth especially in Flathead County that experienced a large influx of seasonal traffic during the peak travel season. Flathead County has seen its population grow over the past century, with a significant increase over the past thirty-five years. **Table 3-1** shows that from 1970 through 2005, the County population has more than doubled, increasing by an estimated 43,712 persons. The most significant increase in population occurred between 1990 and 2000 that accounted for over 25 percent increase in the population growth. Likewise, the County's employment data shows an increase of 39,315 jobs between 1970 and 2005. **Figure 3-1** shows the Flathead County population and employment trends between 1970 and 2005 (estimated) in a graphical format.

Table 3-1
Flathead County
Population and Employment Trends (1970-2005)

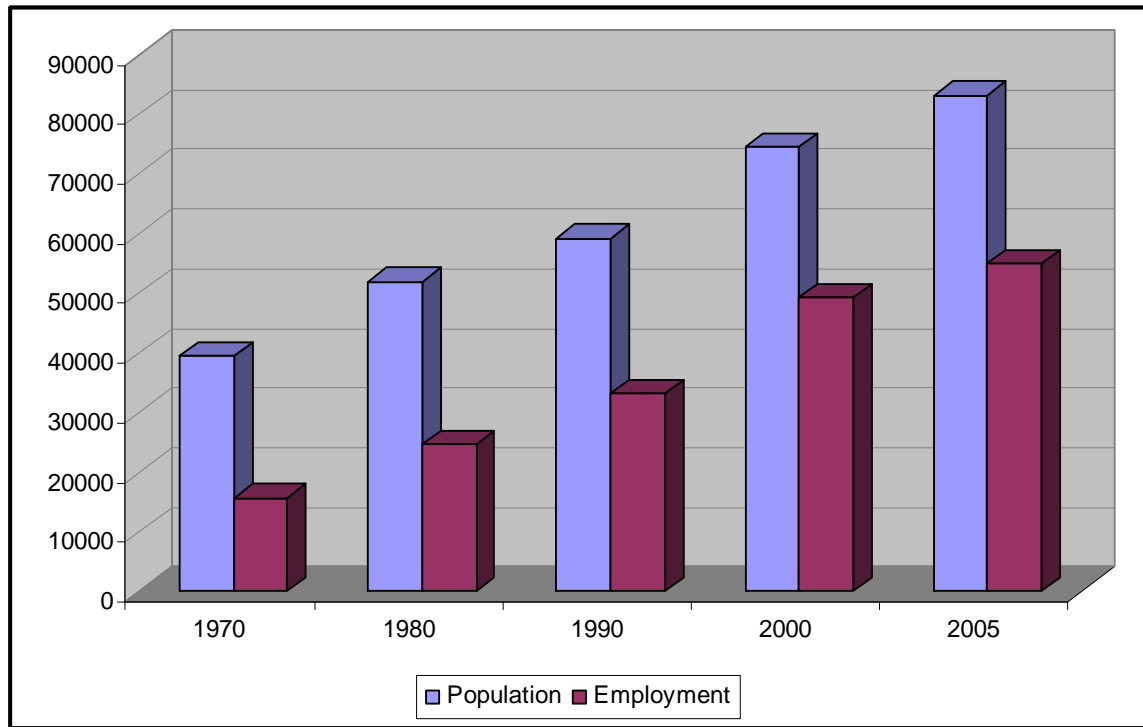
Year	Population	Employment*
1970	39,460	15,627
1980	51,966	24,705
1990	59,218	33,258
2000	74,471	49,278
2005**	83,172	54,942

Source: US Bureau of the Census, Census of Population
(1970 thru 2000)

* Employment data is number of jobs, not number of employed people.

** Population and employment data for 2006 are estimates.

Figure 3-1
Flathead County
Population and Employment Trends (1970-2006)



These population trends can further be analyzed by examining the amount of population within the cities contained within Flathead County and the incorporated areas (i.e. Kalispell, Columbia Falls, and Whitefish), in comparison to the total population of Flathead County. **Table 3-2** shows the historic population trends for Flathead County from 1970 through 2005 as well as the incorporated areas in Flathead County. **Figure 3-2** presents this information graphically.

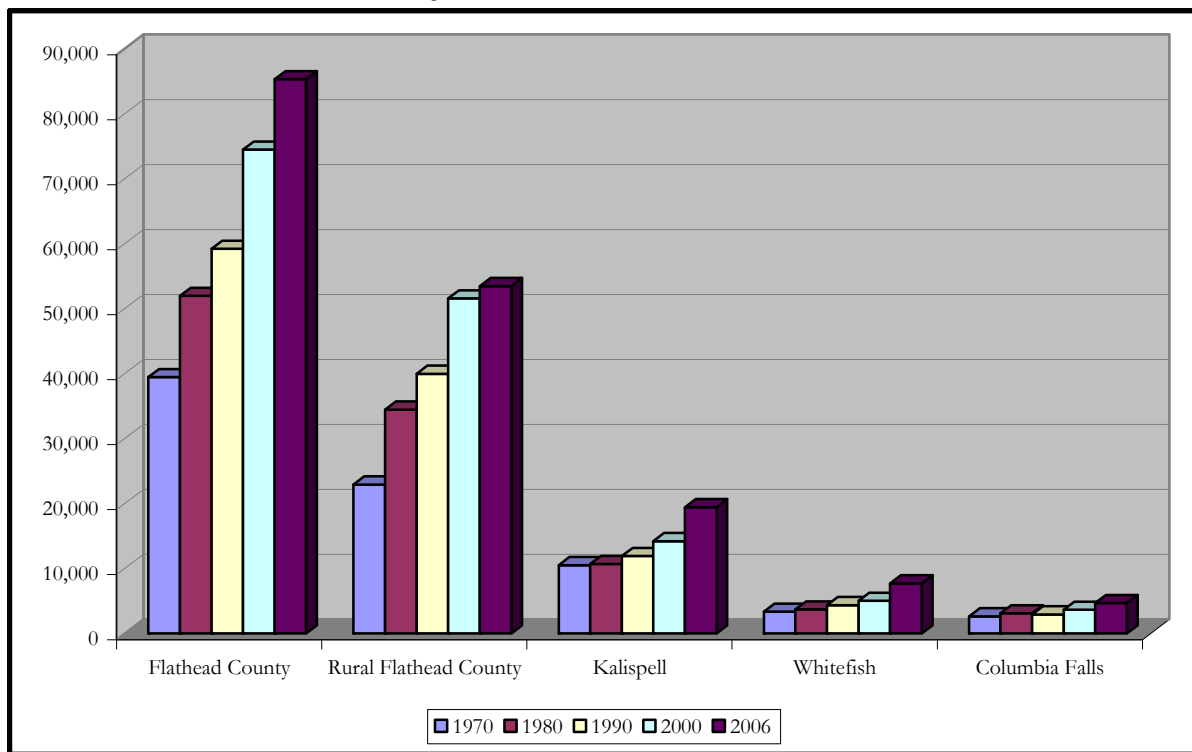
Table 3-2
Flathead County
Historic Population Trends (1970-2006)

Year	Flathead County Population	Rural Flathead County Population	City of Kalispell Population	City of Columbia Falls Population	City of Whitefish Population
1970	39,460	22,933	10,526	2,652	3,349
1980	51,966	34,462	10,689	3,112	3,703
1990	59,218	39,991	11,917	2,942	4,368
2000	74,471	51,571	14,223	3,645	5,032
2006**	85,314	53,483	19,432	4,676	7,723

Source: US Bureau of the Census, Census of Population (1970 thru 2000)

** Population data for 2006 are estimates as of July 1, 2006.

Figure 3-2
Flathead County
Historic Population Trends (1970-2006)



In recent decades there were other notable changes in Flathead County's population. In Flathead County, and elsewhere in Montana and the nation, the population's age profile got older. Between 1970 and 2000, the number of county residents under the age of 18 increased by 4,977 persons, residents age 18 to 64 increased by 24,239 persons, and residents 65 and older increased by 5,520 persons. This can be seen in **Table 3-3**. This information is also shown graphically on **Figure 3-3**.

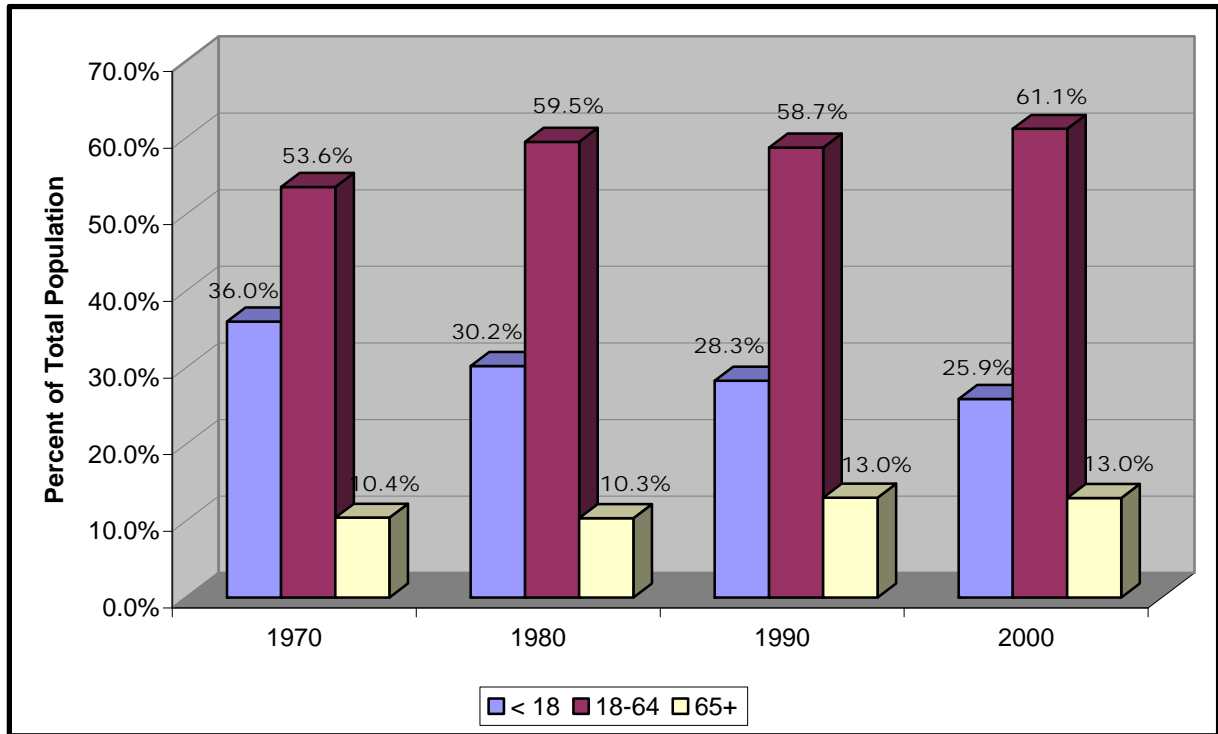
Table 3-3
Comparison of County Resident Age Distribution (1970-2000)

Year	Age			Total
	< 18	18-64	65+	
1970*	14,310	21,289	4,136	39,735
1980	15,693	30,897	5,376	51,966
1990	16,749	34,753	7,716	59,218
2000	19,287	45,528	9,656	74,471
Change (1970-2000)	4,977	24,239	5,520	34,736

Source: US Bureau of the Census, Census of Population (1970 and 2000)

*1970 counts are estimates from July 1, 1970

Figure 3-3
Comparison of County Resident Age Distribution
(1970-2000)



In 2000, the Flathead County economy supported an estimated 49,278 jobs. From 1970 to 2000, the number of jobs in Flathead County more than doubled, from 15,627 jobs in 1970 to 49,278 jobs in 2000. **Table 3-4** displays countywide employment by economic sector from 1970 through 2000. This information is shown graphically in **Figure 3-4**.

Table 3-4
Flathead County Employment Trends
By Economic Sector (1970-2000)

Economic Sector	1970	1980	1990	2000	Change (1970-2000)
Farm Employment	730	975	994	1,124	394
Agricultural Services & Forestry	169	273	501	1,223	1,054
Mining	40	17	95	227	187
Construction	674	1,626	1,925	4,183	3,509
Manufacturing	3,345	4,095	4,127	5,106	1,761
Transportation & Public Utilities	1,327	1,928	1,803	2,205	878
Wholesale Trade	501	862	971	1,198	697

Flathead County Transportation Plan – Phase II Socioeconomic Analysis and Growth Projections

Retail Trade	2,831	4,634	6,443	9,873	7,042
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	1,115	1,821	2,428	3,850	2,735
Services	2,484	4,969	9,832	15,600	13,116
Federal, Civilian Government	461	743	865	851	390
Military	416	318	459	389	(27)
State Government**	307	420	495	551	244
Local Government**	1,227	2,024	2,320	2,898	1,671
Totals	15,627	24,705	33,258	49,278	33,651

* Includes total full-time and part-time employment.

** For the year 1970, state & local government categories weren't separated. Numbers shown are estimates based on percentages observed from 1970 thru 2000.

Source: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, REIS Data Series, 2000.

**Figure 3-4
Employment Trends By Economic Sector
Flathead County (1970-2000)**

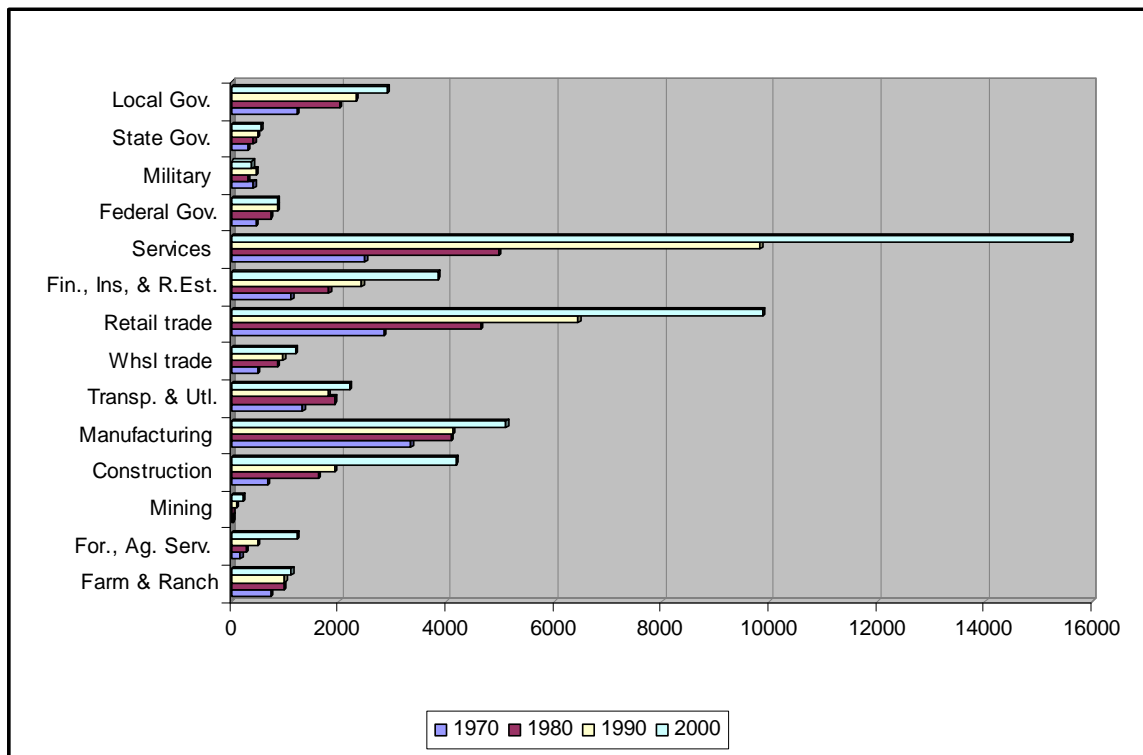
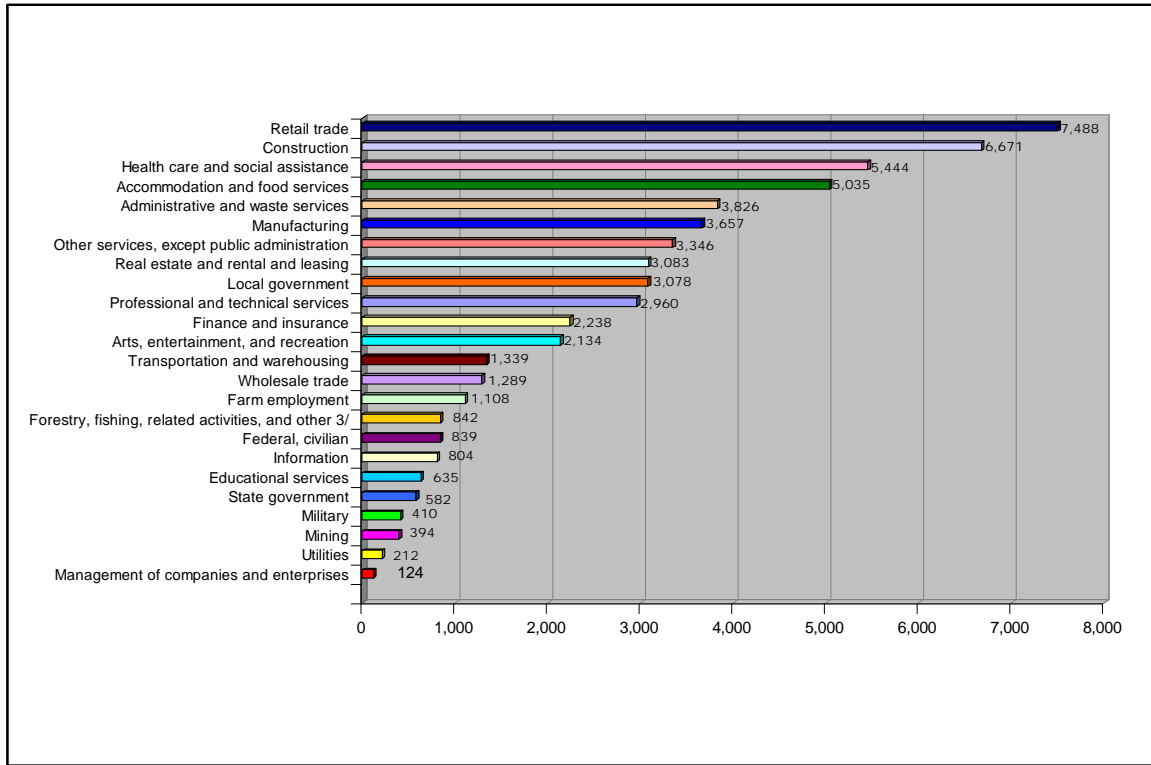


Figure 3-5 shows the breakdown of employment sectors in Flathead County. This graphic presents the Flathead County 2005 Employment, by economic center, as classified by the *North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)*. This figure shows graphically what the highest employment sectors are in the County. The retail industry is the largest employment base in the County, followed by construction, health care, tourism, and administrative and waste services rounding out the top five employment categories.

Figure 3-5
Employment Trends By NAIC Sector
Flathead County (2005)



The economic trend data presented in **Figure 3-4** and **Figure 3-5** is not surprising, given the fact that the retail and tourism sectors are large attractions to the Flathead Valley. Many of the top ten economic sectors are types of business that feed off of this sector and/or are directly dependent on this sector. The healthcare industry is also a booming industry. This trend is seen all over Montana, and is likely to continue. The boom in the healthcare industry especially is a “high-growth” sector both in the state of Montana and nationally. This is partly due to the aging of our population. The employment data presented in this section includes both full-time and part-time jobs. An interesting nuance over the past thirty years has been the change in workforce participation. There are many more women in the workforce now than there were thirty years ago. This relates partly to the change in demographics (families are having fewer children than thirty years ago) and also the availability of part-time jobs. Many part-time jobs include retail and tourism centered jobs, and these positions have attracted a greater proportion of women desiring part-time positions. In some cases, several part-time jobs are held. The fundamental importance of understanding economic trends is that eventually, the numbers and types of jobs equate to vehicle travel on our transportation system.

Population and Employment Projections

Population and economic projections are used to predict future travel patterns, and to analyze the potential performance capabilities of the Flathead County transportation system. Projections of the study area's future population and employment are developed from both Flathead County trends (regression line projections) and Growth Policy information. Three projection scenarios are provided through the year 2030 (the planning horizon).

The basic scenario that is presented is referred to as the "Moderate Growth" scenario. This is the scenario that is most likely to occur, based on past trends and what has happened in other Montana community's over the past thirty years. This scenario was selected as the basis for the transportation modeling, and represents a continuation of the current population and growth trends already observed as presented in **Section 3.1**, such that adequate services and infrastructure will be planned for if the current levels of development continue. It assumes that the Flathead County population and economy will continue to grow at the same rate it has in the past decade. If this growth rate pattern does not develop further, or is not sustained, then demand will not occur as planned for in this Transportation Plan, and projects may be delayed or avoided. A second scenario was also developed, and is referred to as the "Low Growth" scenario. It builds from much of the population and employment trends that were realized in the 1980's, where economic growth was fairly flat due to many different circumstances. Lastly, a third growth scenario, referred to as a "High Growth" situation, was developed to reflect a more aggressive growth pattern in both population and employment. This growth trend is patterned after population and employment trends that were realized between 2000 and 2005, where economic growth was fairly higher than past years. A breakdown of the population and employment projections produced in each scenario for Flathead County, are presented in **Table 3-5** and shown graphically in **Figure 3-6** and **Figure 3-7**.

**Table 3-5
Flathead County - Population and Employment
Projections (2005-2030)**

Year	Low Growth		Moderate Growth		High Growth	
	Population (1.31%)	Employment (1.00%)	Population (1.59%)	Employment (1.88%)	Population (2.23%)	Employment (4.01%)
2005	83,172	54,942	83,172	54,942	83,172	54,942
2010	88,764	57,745	89,675	60,313	92,869	66,877
2015	94,733	60,690	97,127	66,210	103,696	81,406
2020	101,102	63,786	104,713	72,683	115,785	99,090
2025	107,901	67,040	112,516	79,788	129,284	120,616
2030	115,156	70,459	121,778	87,589	144,356	146,819

**Figure 3-6
Flathead County Population Projections (2005-2030)**

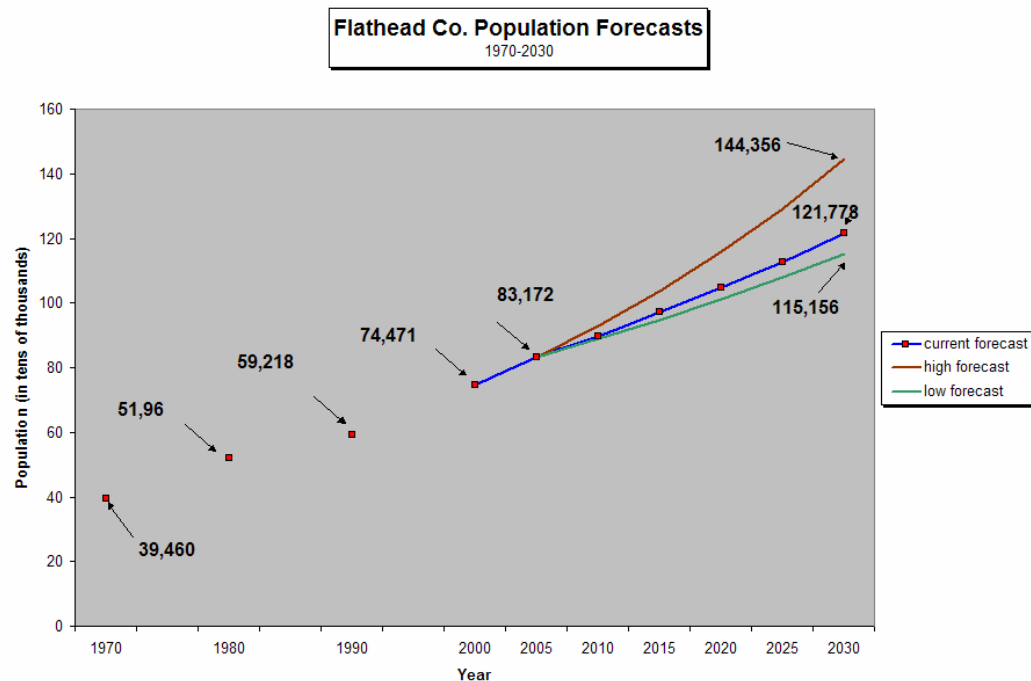
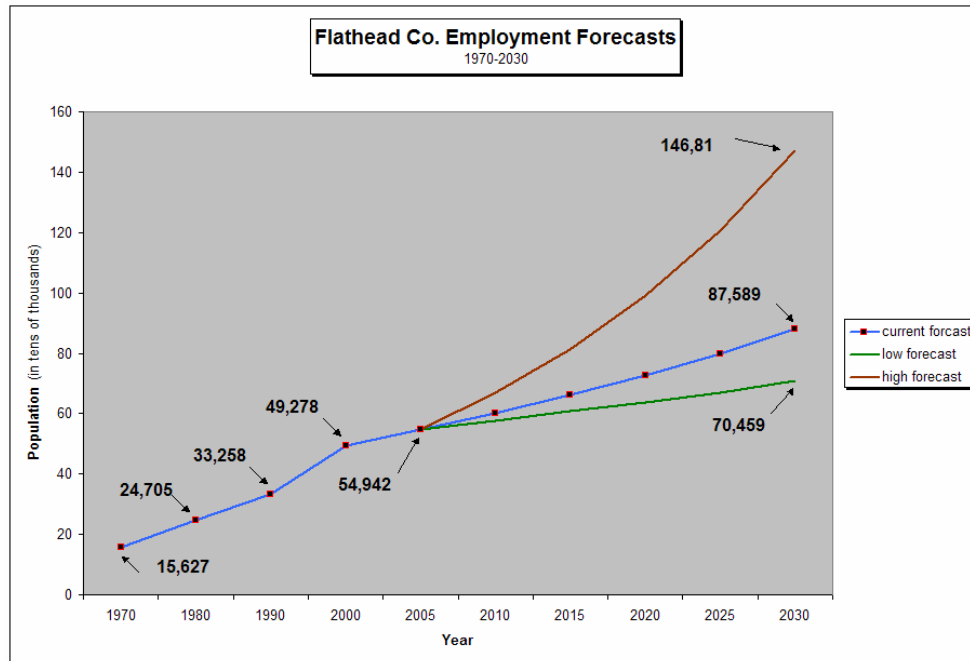


Figure 3-7
Flathead County Employment Projections (2005-2030)



The projections of population and employment presented above are for the entire area of Flathead County. Although several different growth scenarios were utilized, the ultimate growth scenario selected amounted to a growth rate 1.59 percent per year over the next twenty years as stated in the Flathead County *Growth Policy Update*. This was also the case for projected employment forecasts. This is shown in further detail below in **Table 3-6**. Note that the difference in year 2030 and year 2005 numbers are the “forecasts” within the study area boundary that must be assigned to census tracts to evaluate the travel demand model.

**Table 3-6
Transportation Plan Study Area Boundary –
Control Totals (Moderate Scenario)
Total Projected Population and Employment (2030)**

Land Use Designation	Study Area Boundary (2005)	Total Flathead County (2005)	Study Area Boundary (2030)	Total Flathead County (2030)
Total Households *		32,799 { 83,172 people }		48,711 { 121,778 people }
Retail Employment **		7,793 jobs		13,074 jobs
Non-Retail Employment **		47,149 jobs		74,515 jobs

* A household is expected to consist of 2.5 people.

** Jobs are proportioned between the study area boundary and the rest of the County using percentages from population forecasts. This may need to be revisited.

Allocation of Growth Within the Study Area

Montana Department of Transportation's modeling of future traveling patterns out to the year 2030 planning horizon required identification of future socioeconomic characteristics within each census tract and census block. To accomplish this task, a "Land Use Advisory Committee" was formed to discuss and reach consensus on the distribution of future housing and employment growth in the planning area. The committee's membership was recruited from the staff of public agencies and utilities familiar with ongoing development trends in Flathead County. The committee's work considered recent land use trends, land availability and development capabilities, land use regulations, planned public improvements, and known development proposals.